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15 December 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Secretary Laird's Position on the PRU Program

1. Much of my 15 December session with Secretary Laird was devoted to a discussion of the PRU problem. He is anxious to disengage (in the sense of removing all assigned military personnel) as quickly as possible. General Abrams is very much of this persuasion as, apparently, are the Joint Chiefs, though it is hard to tell whether the Chiefs are really voicing their own collective view or simply endorsing that of General Abrams.

2. Laird's concern is, as he is frank to admit, political. He wants the Army out of the program before there is any flap over PRU actions with which any US military personnel are in any way associated. I pointed out the steps that had been taken in recent weeks to tighten controls over the program, curtail the direct operational involvement of US advisory personnel (civil or military) and generally stress the intelligence collection and capture aspects of the program, sharply curtailing the ambush or "elimination" features that had figured more prominently in the program's earlier days. I also stressed the importance of the program, its demonstrated performance record, and the fact that an orderly process was already in train whereby the US role and input would be progressively diminished and the program turned completely over to the GVN by the end of FY 71. My basic pitch was that the sudden removal of assigned military personnel -- whose progressive withdrawal was already planned for -- would complicate the turnover arrangements already in train and seriously jeopardize a going effort with one of the best overall performance records of any allied program in Vietnam. I also pointed out that a precipitate change in the advisory pattern, which thrust too much of the program on the Vietnamese too soon, would actually increase rather than diminish the risk of the very kind of flap we were all so anxious to avoid.

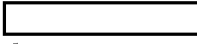

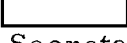
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3. As we talked, Laird perceptibly weathervaned. At the close of our discussion he gave me his decision copy of an 8 December memorandum from General Wheeler and said he would refrain from making up his mind on what to do next until we had had a chance to look at this memorandum, send him our comments, and discuss this problem with him.

4. I am sending a copy of the JCS memo, and this covering note to General Cushman, Mr. Karamessines and  asking   to begin drafting suggested comments for transmittal back to Secretary Laird. I would recommend that we caucus on this matter at your convenience after your return from New York.

George A. Carver, Jr.
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

Attachment
JCSM-752-69

cc: General Cushman w/att (Copy No. 2)
Mr. Karamessines w/att (Copy No. 3)
/att (Copy No. 4)

Copy No. 1 - Phoenix/PRU file - *retd fr DC 1*
Copy No. 5 - GAC Chrono

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